

Clarifying Terms of the RCIA

RCIA – Stands for *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the faith formation process by which adults and children of catechetical age (age 7 and up) go through to become Catholic Christians.

INQUIRER – The term given to a person inquiring about the Catholic faith. They have been moved by the Spirit, but may not have decided upon officially being enrolled in the RCIA process.

CATECHUMEN – Term reserved for the “**unbaptized**” who have been admitted into the Order of Catechumens via the Rite of Acceptance.

CATECHUMENATE – The period of spiritual and catechetical formation for the catechumens.

CONVERT – Term strictly reserved for those who have converted from unbelief to Christian belief.

CANDIDATE – Term used for “**baptized**” Christians from another church or ecclesial community (e.g., Anglican/Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, etc.). They can fall into two categories: uncatechized = they have received little or no religious instruction in the Christian faith, or catechized = they have received religious instruction in their particular faith tradition and have a relationship with Christ.

ELECT – The term given to those catechumens who have been judged ready by the Church and affirmed by the Bishop to advance toward the sacraments of initiation (i.e., baptism, confirmation, eucharist). This “election” normally coincides with the season of Lent and the Period of Purification and Enlightenment and concludes at the Easter Vigil.

SCRUTINY – Rites of self-searching and repentance prayed over the “elect” on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent as they prepare for the sacraments of initiation.

NEOPHYTE – Term used for the newly baptized. It means “new light” as they are new lights to the world following their reception into the Catholic faith through the sacraments of initiation.